

MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

In August 2013, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan. The Council's strategic plan provides the first comprehensive strategic approach for fisheries management in federal waters off the Mid-Atlantic coast. Over the next five years, the strategic plan will guide the Council's efforts to achieve sustainable and productive fisheries, a healthy marine ecosystem, and stable coastal communities.

Implementation of the MAFSP will be a long-term process, and the purpose of the 2014 Implementation Plan is to identify specific tasks necessary for achieving the goals and objectives defined in the strategic plan. The implementation plan was designed to provide a comprehensive and realistic framework for merging the Council's ongoing projects with new initiatives. The plan will be used by the Council and staff as a planning tool and as a way to update the public on progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

Although the 2014 Implementation Plan was organized around the goals and objectives of the MAFSP, it is largely focused on specific tasks to be undertaken in 2014. The plan will be updated and expanded each year to reflect the Council's progress and to accommodate new opportunities and challenges.

BACKGROUND

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (also referred to as the Council or MAFMC) is responsible for the conservation and management of fish stocks within the federal 200-mile limit of the mid-Atlantic region (North Carolina through New York).

The Mid-Atlantic Council was established in 1976 by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act (later renamed the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, or MSA). The law created a 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), eliminated foreign fishing effort within the EEZ, and charged eight regional councils with management of fishery resources in the newly expanded federal waters.

The Council develops fishery management recommendations which must be approved by the Secretary of Commerce before they become final. All of the Council's fishery management recommendations must be consistent with the ten national standards as defined by the MSA.

The Council develops fishery management recommendations for thirteen species of fish and shellfish, including summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, bluefish, Atlantic mackerel, short-finned squid, long-finned squid, butterfish, surfclams, ocean quahogs, tilefish, spiny dogfish and monkfish.

The Council initiated its Visioning and Strategic Planning Project in 2011 in an effort to address current and future challenges and secure a more stable and sustainable future for Mid-Atlantic fisheries. Between September 2011 and February 2012, the Council collected input for the strategic plan from more than 1,500 stakeholders through surveys, roundtable meetings, and position letters. Their input was summarized in the *Stakeholder Input Report*, released by the Council in June 2012.

In August 2012, the Council established a Visioning and Strategic Planning Working Group composed of Council members, stakeholders, and regional leadership. Through a series of meetings from August-December 2012, the working group crafted a vision, mission, goals, and objectives for the strategic plan. The framework developed by the working group was further refined by Council staff and presented to the Council as a Draft Strategic Plan in June 2013. The final plan was approved by the Council at its August 2013 meeting.

STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

VISION

Healthy and productive marine ecosystems supporting thriving, sustainable marine fisheries that provide the greatest overall benefit to stakeholders.

MISSION

The Council manages marine fisheries in federal waters of the Mid-Atlantic region for their long-term sustainability and productivity consistent with the National Standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council is committed to the effective stewardship of these fisheries and associated habitats by incorporating scientific information and informed public input in transparent processes that produce fishery management plans and programs.

Communication Goal: Engage, Inform, and educate stakeholders to promote public awareness and encourage constructive participation in the Council process.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop and implement a strategic communications plan to provide clear and accurate information to a broad range of stakeholders
2. Engage a diverse audience of stakeholders
3. Increase stakeholder trust and facilitate greater stakeholder engagement by making the Council process accessible and transparent
4. Increase awareness and understanding of fishery science and management
5. Increase stakeholder involvement in the development of fishery management actions

Science Goal: Ensure that the Council's management decisions are based on timely and accurate scientific data that are analyzed and modeled in a manner that improves management performance and builds stakeholder confidence.

OBJECTIVES:

6. Promote the collection and analysis of accurate and timely scientific data to support the Council's management plans and programs
7. Improve our understanding of the social and economic dimensions of Mid-Atlantic fishing communities
8. Promote the collection and analysis of data needed to support the Council's transition to an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management
9. Encourage effective stakeholder participation in data collection and analysis
10. Promote efficient and accurate methods of monitoring and reporting

Management Goal: Develop fishery management strategies that provide for productive, sustainable fisheries.

OBJECTIVES:

11. Evaluate the Council's fishery management plans
12. Incorporate economic and social analysis of management alternatives into the decision-making process
13. Develop management strategies that enable efficient operation of commercial and recreational fishing businesses
14. Develop innovative management strategies for recreational and commercial fisheries
15. Advance ecosystem approaches to fisheries management in the Mid-Atlantic

Governance Goal: Ensure that the Council's governance structures and practices fairly represent stakeholder interests, are coordinated with the Council's management partners, and include a clear and well-defined decision-making process.

OBJECTIVES:

16. Establish a formal decision-making process for the development and evaluation of management actions
17. Develop and strengthen partnerships to promote greater efficiency and enhance coordination among management partners and other relevant organizations
18. Ensure that stakeholder interests are accurately understood and meaningfully considered in the Council process

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN STRUCTURE

The 2014 Implementation Plan is organized in to four sections, described below.

Proposed Deliverables

The Proposed Deliverables section provides an overview of deliverables expected by the end of the implementation plan period. Since many of the proposed implementation activities cannot be measured with traditional metrics, the list of deliverables establishes a mechanism for measuring the Council's progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

Strategy Checklist for Action Development

A significant portion of the MAFSP strategies cannot ever be "completed" because they relate to tasks that should be considered an intrinsic part of every project or action. The Strategy Checklist for Action Development section is the companion to the Proposed Deliverables section—it provides a mechanism for ensuring that the Council is upholding the standards included in its strategic plan. These tasks are expected to be addressed for each Council action for which they are relevant. The Strategy Checklist for Action Development was designed to be used by the Council and Staff as a helpful guide for integrating the Council's strategic goals into everyday action.

Science and Research Needs

The Science and Research Needs section is a summary of the specific science and research needs that were identified in the MAFSP. These strategies are handled differently because they require additional planning in coordination with NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center and other research institutions. The Science Center has already played a significant role in the development of the strategic plan, but since the Council has little control over how and when the science-related tasks of the strategic plan will be addressed, the implementation of these strategies requires a unique approach.

Proposed 2014 Implementation Activities

The Proposed 2014 Implementation Activities section identifies the specific activities and projects that the Council plans to begin or complete in 2014. The matrix is organized around the four goal areas identified in the MAFSP and includes anticipated timelines for completion of each task. Each activity is linked with one or more "primary" objectives from the strategic plan, indicated by a solid blue circle. Many activities are also linked with "secondary" objectives, indicated by an open blue circle.

PROPOSED 2014 DELIVERABLES

SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, AND BLACK SEA BASS	<input type="checkbox"/> 2015 specifications (review) <input type="checkbox"/> 2015 recreational management measures <input type="checkbox"/> Amendment 17 (black sea bass recreational management) <input type="checkbox"/> Amendment 19 (scup allocation) <input type="checkbox"/> Scup GRA Framework (December and February) <input type="checkbox"/> Refinement of scup allocation model (contract) <input type="checkbox"/> Fishery Performance Reports
MACKEREL, SQUID, AND BUTTERFISH	<input type="checkbox"/> 2015, 2016, and 2017 specifications for squid and butterfish (develop and approve) <input type="checkbox"/> 2015 mackerel specifications (review) <input type="checkbox"/> Shad and river herring working group <input type="checkbox"/> Amendment 16 (Deep Sea Coral Protection) <input type="checkbox"/> Framework 9 (Address disapproved Amendment 14 issues and/or BRP revisions) <input type="checkbox"/> Fishery Performance Reports
BLUEFISH	<input type="checkbox"/> 2015, 2016, and 2017 specifications (develop and approve) <input type="checkbox"/> Fishery Performance Report
TILEFISH	<input type="checkbox"/> 2015, 2016, 2017 specifications (develop and approve) <input type="checkbox"/> 5 year FMP review (IFQ) <input type="checkbox"/> Fishery Performance Report
SURFCLAM & OCEAN QUAHOG	<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment 17 (Cost recovery amendment) <input type="checkbox"/> 2015 specifications (review) <input type="checkbox"/> Fishery Performance Reports
DOGFISH	<input type="checkbox"/> 2015 specifications (review) <input type="checkbox"/> Fishery Performance Report <input type="checkbox"/> Amendment 4 (Limited access and male only fishery) (?)
MONKFISH	<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment 6 (Alternatives to DAS system) (completion 2016)
STURGEON	<input type="checkbox"/> Management measures to reduce bycatch (possible pending scientific review of assessment) (?)
GENERAL	<input type="checkbox"/> EAFM guidance document (completion 2015) <input type="checkbox"/> Consistency Amendment Vessel Baseline Regulations (NERO Lead) <input type="checkbox"/> Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology
COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH	<input type="checkbox"/> Communications plan <input type="checkbox"/> Completion of initial phase of website development <input type="checkbox"/> Reorganization of stakeholder database <input type="checkbox"/> Revised "Navigating the Council Process" booklet with new website version
SCIENCE & RESEARCH	<input type="checkbox"/> EFH updates for all species (FMPs) (completion 2015) <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive research priority plan <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings
WORKSHOPS	<input type="checkbox"/> Climate change and science workshop <input type="checkbox"/> Climate change and governance workshop <input type="checkbox"/> Wind energy best practices workshop (in coordination with BOEM)

STRATEGY CHECKLIST FOR ACTION DEVELOPMENT

The following items should be used by staff and Council members in the development and evaluation of management alternatives.

COMMUNICATION

- ☐ Ensure that communication materials meet the federal plain language guidelines
- ☐ Provide conference lines or webinar access to meetings whenever possible
- ☐ Ensure that meetings and events are posted on Council website calendar in a timely manner and with relevant information and documents
- ☐ Follow Council guidelines* for collection and summarization of public comments
- ☐ Ensure that background information about the action is included with briefing materials each time the issue is discussed at a Council meeting
- ☐ Consider the feasibility and appropriateness of a workshop as part of the action development process
- ☐ Ensure that scoping and public hearings are held in locations with high concentrations of interested individuals
- ☐ Use targeted communication to inform stakeholders and solicit public input from individuals and groups that are most likely to be interested in or affected by the potential action

SCIENCE

- ☐ Fully consider species interactions in the assessment process and in the determination of catch limits
- ☐ Effectively communicate stakeholders' concerns or recommendations regarding monitoring/observing to the NEFSC

MANAGEMENT

- ☐ Evaluate the cumulative social and economic impacts of proposed and existing management alternatives
- ☐ Consider energy efficiency in the development of management measures
- ☐ Account for uncertainty in recreational catch estimates
- ☐ Support the development of models and analyses that evaluate alternative bag, size, and seasonal limits
- ☐ Reduce regulatory discards
- ☐ Ensure fair access to recreational fisheries throughout their range
- ☐ Incorporate species interactions into fishery management plans and coordinate these considerations across appropriate management plans
- ☐ Consider the relationship between essential fish habitat and productivity of marine resources into management decisions
- ☐ Minimize adverse ecosystem impacts

GOVERNANCE

- ☐ Follow Council guidelines for evaluation of stakeholder input
- ☐ Use advisory bodies and stakeholder input to inform the decision-making process and actively monitor changing conditions in the fisheries and ecosystem

**Guidelines for collection, analysis, and evaluation of public input will be developed as part of the implementation plan.*

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH NEEDS

The Council's 2014-2018 strategic plan identifies the following items as high-priority research needs:

DATA NEEDS

- ☐ Timeline for completion of acceptable benchmark assessments for all of the Council's managed fisheries
- ☐ Oceanographic data related to climate change and ocean acidification
- ☐ Regional evaluation of species interactions within the marine ecosystem
- ☐ Climate change risk assessment for the Northeast marine ecosystem
- ☐ Habitat data—particularly data to link habitat protection with fishery productivity
- ☐ Relevant and up-to-date social and economic data about Mid-Atlantic communities
- ☐ Real-time commercial fisheries data
- ☐ Bioeconomic models

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, FUNDING, AND PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- ☐ Electronic VTRs / log books in the commercial and for-hire sectors
- ☐ Innovative technologies (e.g., electronic monitoring, smart phones, etc.) to improve the accuracy and/or efficiency of data collection
- ☐ Evaluation of potential uses for volunteer angler data in recreational management decisions
- ☐ Additional observer program funding options
- ☐ Cooperative and collaborative research program expansion

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INNOVATION

- ☐ Management strategies that account for uncertainty in recreational catch estimates
- ☐ Management strategies that reduce regulatory discards
- ☐ Management strategies that minimize adverse ecosystem impacts
- ☐ Management strategies that ensure fair access to recreational fisheries

PROPOSED 2014 IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES	TIMEFRAME					GOAL/OBJECTIVE																			
	Year					Comm.					Science					Mgmt.					Gov.				
	14	15	16	17	18	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18		
COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH																									
1.	Develop and approve a strategic communications plan					●					●	○	○	○	○				○						
2.	Complete initial phase of website development (finalize all existing pages)					●					●	○		○	○										
3.	Develop new webpages: Fisheries data sections; Council Actions pages; Publications database					●					●	○	○	○	○				○						
4.	Complete development of stakeholder contact database					●					○	●		○	○				○	○			○		○
5.	Update and expand stakeholder group lists (commercial fishing associations, recreational fishing clubs, environmental groups)					●						●		○	○				○			○		○	
6.	Refine the Council's email distribution system to allow stakeholders to choose what types of news they receive from the Council (e.g. only press releases, only meeting agendas, etc.)					●					○	●		○	●										
7.	Revise the "Navigating the Council Process " brochure, and develop website version					●								●	○										
8.	Develop and implement a checklist to assist staff in stakeholder outreach for council actions					●						○	○		●				○						
9.	Develop a website-based public comment system					●						●	○	○	●				○			○		○	
10.	Develop guidelines for collection and analysis of public input					●						○	○		●				○	○		○		○	
11.	Continue to provide regular news and updates using social media tools						Ongoing					●	○	○	○	○				○			○		
12.	Advise and support the Marine Resource Education Program (MREP)						Ongoing							○	●	○						○		○	
SCIENCE & RESEARCH																									
13.	Host East Coast Climate Change and Science Workshop					●						●		●		○			●			○		○	○
14.	Initiate development of a comprehensive research priority plan					→										●	○	○	○	○	○			○	○
15.	Convene Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings (as needed)						Ongoing								●		●	●	●	○	○	○		○	
16.	Complete Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Updates for all species					●										●		●			○			○	

LEGEND

● Year(s) of activity

→ Completion date is unknown

● Related objective(s)

**Italicized items indicate that the activity is a collaborative activity or project.*

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES	TIMEFRAME					GOAL/OBJECTIVE																	
	Year					Comm.					Science					Mgmt.					Gov.		
	14	15	16	17	18	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
MANAGEMENT																							
17. SF/Scup/BSB Amendment 17—Evaluate alternative regional/spatial management options for the black sea bass fishery.	●	●															○	○	●	○			
18. SF/Scup/BSB Amendment 19 —Evaluate the current commercial-recreational scup allocations	●	●															●	○	●	○			
19. SF/Scup/BSB Framework Adjustment—Assess the effectiveness of Scup GRAs	●																○	○	●				○
20. Address additional conservation of river herring and shad through an interagency working group	●	●	●														○		○	●		○	○
21. MSB Amendment 16 (MSB)—Consider measures to protect deep sea corals	●																○		●		○	○	
22. MSB Framework 9 —Address disapproved Amendment 14 issues and/or BRP revisions	→														●			●				○	
23. Surfclam/Quahog Amendment 17—Cost recovery amendment	●	○															●	●				○	○
24. Develop EAFM Guidance Document	●	●											○				○		○	●		○	○
25. <i>Monkfish Amendment 6</i>	●	●															●						○
26. <i>Consistency Amendment - Vessel Baseline Regulations (NERO Lead)</i>	●	●															●	●			●	●	
27. <i>Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) Omnibus Amendment</i>	●										○				●						○	○	
28. Refine scup allocation model (contract)	●																●	●	●				○
29. Complete 5-year Tilefish FMP review	●											●				●	○	○	○				○
30. Develop management measures to reduce Atlantic Sturgeon bycatch (pending assessment review)																	○		○	●		○	○
31. Support the development of a MSA certification program for U.S. harvested fish													●										
GOVERNANCE																							
32. Climate change and governance workshop	●																		●		●	●	
33. Complete advisory panel fishery performance reports for each fishery	●	●	●	●	●		○	○	○	●				○			○						●
34. <i>Conduct a workshop to identify best practices for wind energy siting and construction (in coordination with BOEM)</i>																					●		

LEGEND

● Year(s) of activity

→ Completion date is unknown

● Related objective(s)

*Italicized items indicate that the activity is a collaborative activity or project.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES	TIMEFRAME					GOAL/OBJECTIVE																		
	Year					Comm.					Science					Mgmt.					Gov.			
	14	15	16	17	18	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
35. Continue to provide input into the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization process	→																						●	
36. Participate in Partnership for Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Science	Ongoing										●		●									○		
37. Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program	Ongoing										●											○		
38. Marine Recreational Information Program	Ongoing						○	○	○					●								○		
39. Mid-Atlantic Regional Association for Coastal Ocean Observing System	Ongoing													●								○		
40. Participate on the Chesapeake Bay Goal Implementation Team	Ongoing																					●		
41. Participate in Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning activities through coordination with Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body	Ongoing																			●		●		
42. Participate in Protected Resources Take Reduction meetings	Ongoing																			●		●		
43. Continue to coordinate with the NEFSC, particularly in relation to the goals, objectives, and strategies of the NEFSC strategic plan	Ongoing																					●		

LEGEND

● Year(s) of activity

→ Completion date is unknown

● Related objective(s)

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